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Early childhood caries and oral care practices in Kerala, India. B JOSE* and N M KING
(The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong)

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No data are available on the prevalence of caries, or oral healthcare practices for children under 4 years of age living in Kerala, in southern India. Therefore, the aims of this study were to gather data on early childhood caries and oral health care practices of children and the caregivers. A sample of 530 children, aged 8 to 48 months (mean = 2.53±0.96 years), who attended 13 Day Care Centres were examined for caries using a tongue spatula and a torch. The caregiver of each child then completed, by interview, a structured questionnaire. Amongst the group of 252 girls and 278 boys the dmft was 1.84±2.87 with 56.4%(299) of the children being caries free. Fifty-nine (11.1%) were considered to have early childhood caries (ECC) based on the criteria that all four maxillary incisor teeth exhibited caries. Breast-feeding was practised by 99.1% of the mothers. Primary teeth were considered not to be important by 62.6%(332) of the caregivers. The lack of importance attributed to primary teeth by the caregivers maybe partially responsible for the dental caries amongst 8 to 48 months old southern Indian children. bjose@hkusua.hku.hk

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5. Area of Review (check only one):

- (1) Behavioral Sciences/Health Services Research
(2) Behavioral Sciences/Epidemiological Methods

10. List five descriptors by number (see reverse side).
If existing descriptors do not fit your research, then write one new word under "Other". (1) 147

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of the 79th General Session of the International Association for Dental Research (June 27-30, 2001)